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DOCTOR STRANGE®
MASTER OF THE MYSTIC ARTS
MAELSTROM AT THE CENTER OF TIME!

Once he was a man like most *others*— a *worldly* man, seduced and jaded by *material* things. But then he discovered the *separate* reality, where *sorcery* and *men's souls* shaped the forces that shape our *lives*. In that instant, he was *born again*, to become a man like no other!

Stan Lee presents: Dr. STRANGE MASTER OF THE MYSTIC ARTS!™

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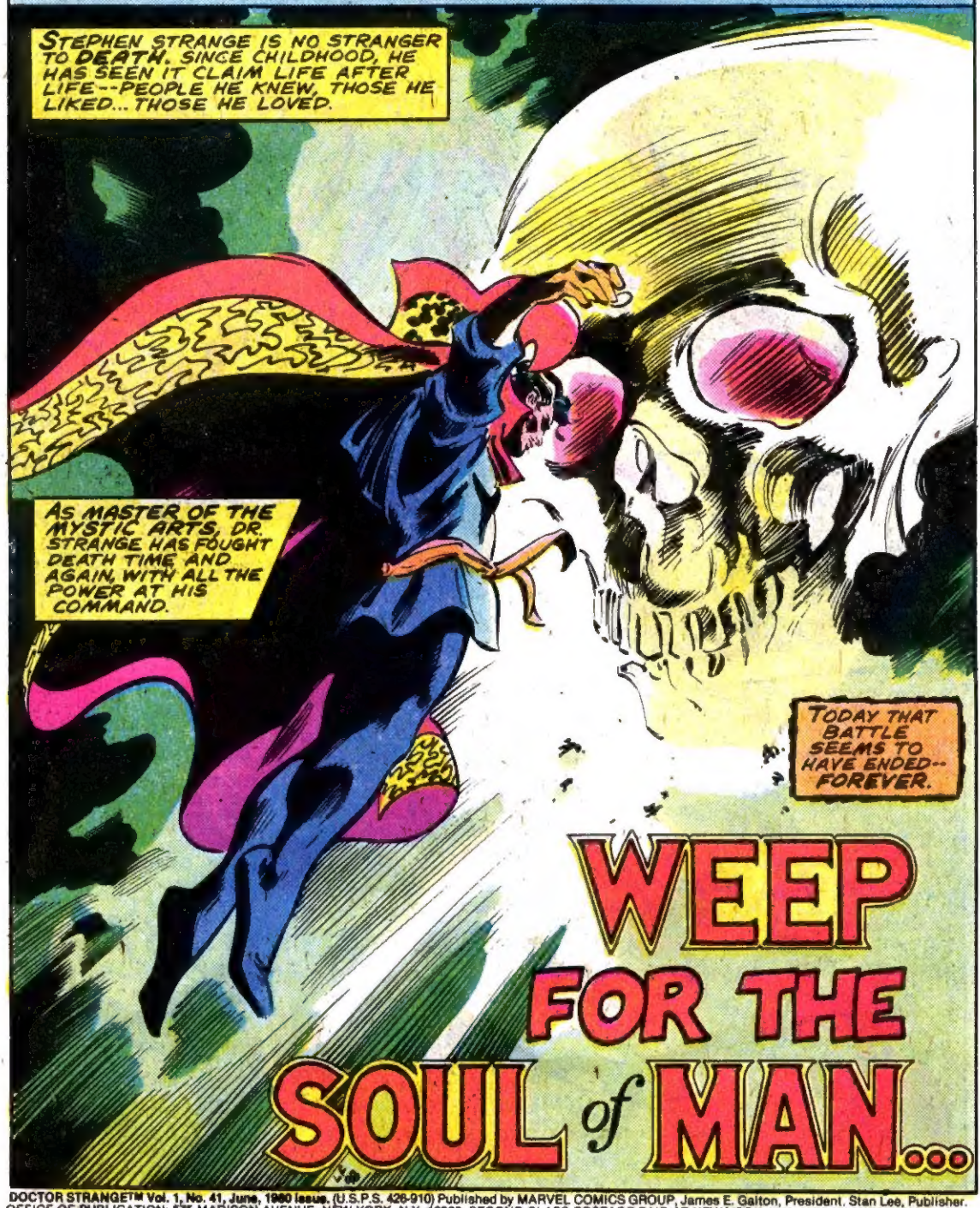
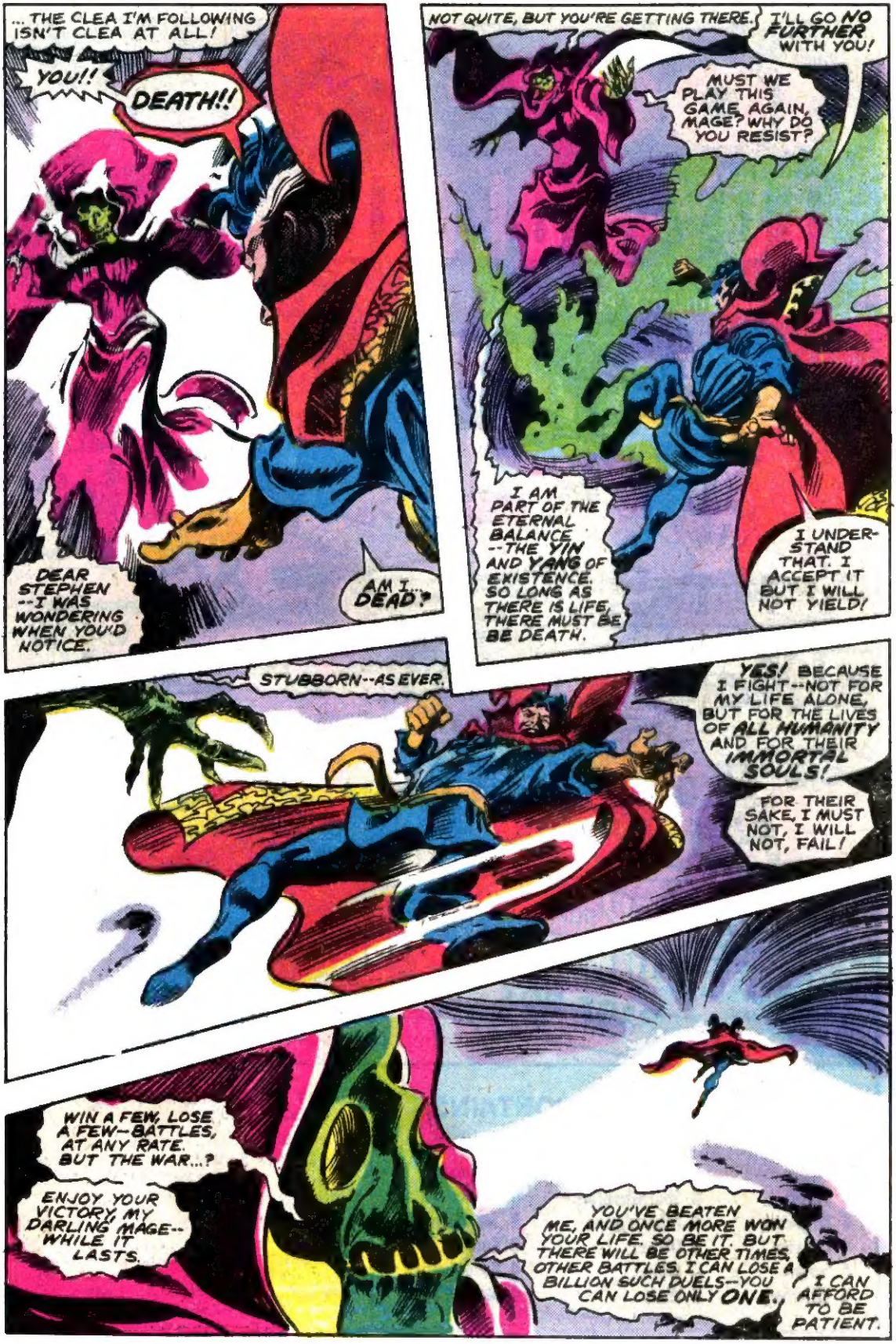
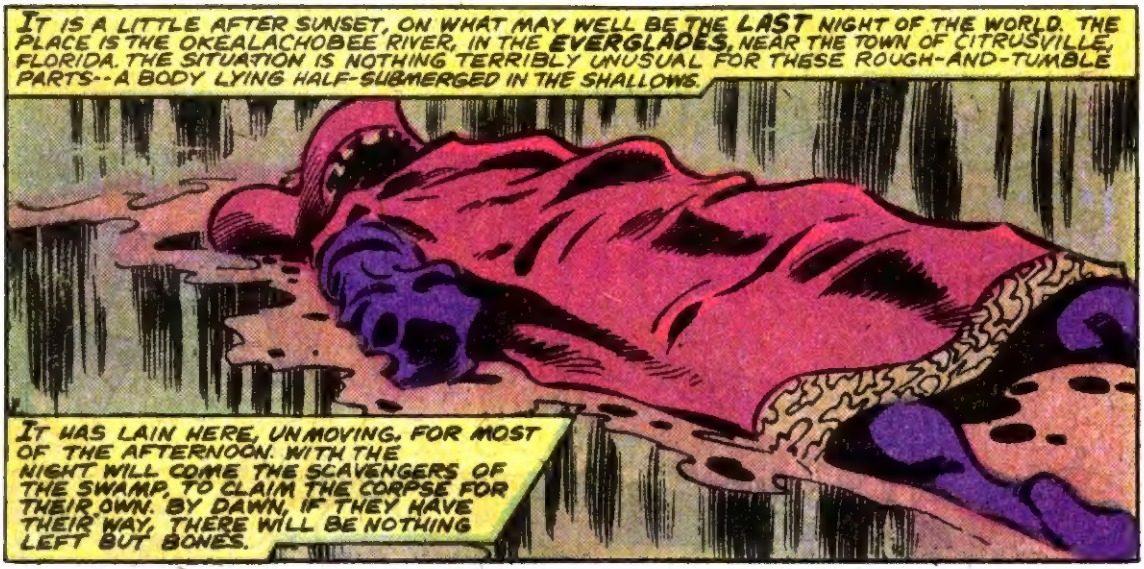

STEPHEN STRANGE IS NO STRANGER TO DEATH. SINCE CHILDHOOD, HE HAS SEEN IT CLAIM LIFE AFTER LIFE--PEOPLE HE KNEW, THOSE HE LIKED... THOSE HE LOVED.
AS MASTER OF THE MYSTIC ARTS, DR. STRANGE HAS FOUGHT DEATH TIME AND AGAIN, WITH ALL THE POWER AT HIS COMMAND.
TODAY THAT BATTLE SEEMS TO HAVE ENDED-- FOREVER.
WEEP FOR THE SOUL of MAN...

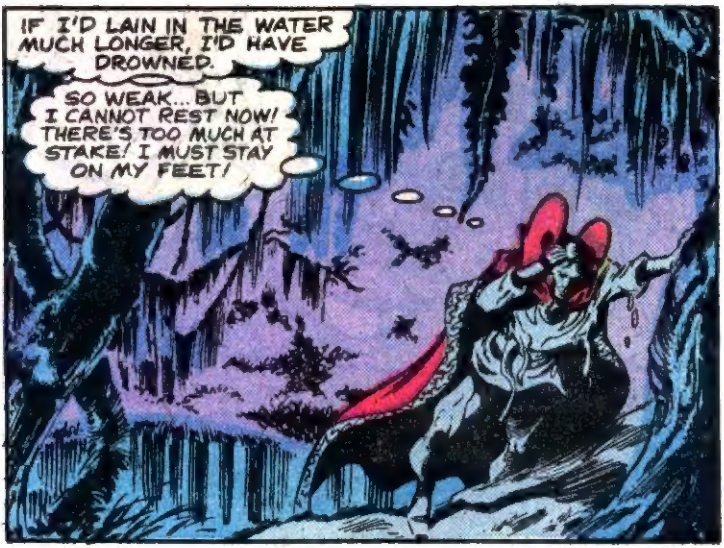
DOCTOR STRANGE™ Vol. 1, No. 41, June, 1980 issue. (U.S.P.S. 426-910) Published by MARVEL COMICS GROUP, James E. Galton, President, Stan Lee, Publisher. OFFICE OF PUBLICATION: 575 MADISON AVENUE, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10022. SECOND CLASS POSTAGE PAID AT NEW YORK, N.Y. AND AT ADDITIONAL MAILING OFFICES. Published bi-monthly. Copyright © 1980 by Marvel Comics Group, a division of Cadence Industries Corporation. All rights reserved. Price 40¢ per copy in the U.S. and Canada. Subscription rate $5.00 for 12 issues. Canada, $6.00. Foreign, $7.00. Printed in the U.S.A. No similarity between any of the names, characters, persons, and/or institutions in this magazine with those of any living or dead person or institution is intended, and any such similarity which may exist is purely coincidental. This periodical may not be sold except by authorized dealers and is sold subject to the conditions that it shall not be sold or distributed with any part of its cover or markings removed, nor in a mutilated condition. DOCTOR STRANGE (including all prominent characters featured in the issue), and the distinctive likenesses thereof, are trademarks of the MARVEL COMICS GROUP.

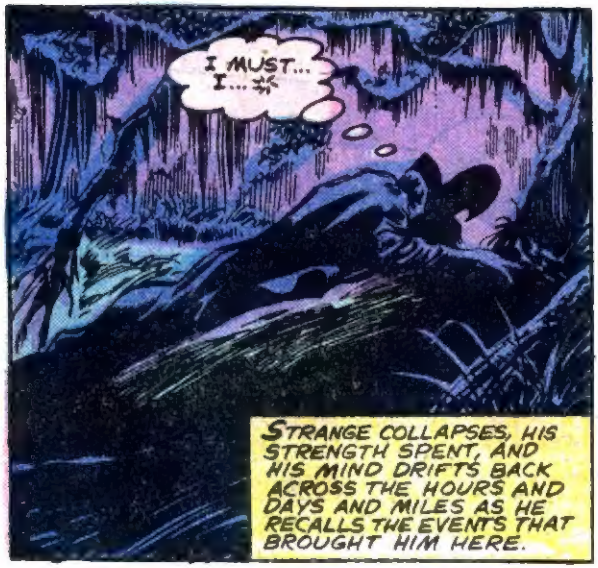
...OOOHHHHH... WHERE...AM I? LAST THING... I...REMEMBER, I WAS... I WAS...
...I... CAN'T FOCUS MY THOUGHTS...
STEPHEN!
BE NOT AFRAID-- YOU ARE IN A PLACE OF SAFETY. NONE CAN TOUCH YOU--OR HARM YOU--WITHIN MY DOMAIN.
COME TO ME, MY DARLING, AND YOU WILL KNOW ETERNAL PEACE.
EH?! MY DISCIPLE, CLEA!
*DOC'S LOYAL MANSERVANT, KIDNAPPED WAY BACK IN ISSUE #38 -- JO.
MY LOVE, THIS IS WONDERFUL! I'VE HAD NO WORD FROM YOU SINCE YOU SET OUT TO FIND WONG*! IS HE ALL RIGHT? HOW DID YOU GET HERE?
SO MANY QUESTIONS, STEPHEN. TRUST YOU NEVER TO SIMPLY ACCEPT THINGS AS THEY ARE, BUT EVER TO SEEK REASONS AND HIDDEN MEANINGS.
VERY WELL, MAGE-- FOLLOW ME, AND ALL YOUR QUESTIONS WILL BE ANSWERED
CLEA--WAIT! WHERE ARE YOU TAKING ME?! IN HOGGOTH'S NAME-- WHERE ARE WE?!?
THIS IS SOME KIND OF ASTRAL LIMBO, A PLACE TOUCHING--YET TOTALLY OUTSIDE OF--SPACE AND TIME. CLEA'S LEADING ME DEEPER INTO IT. SHE CALLED THIS... HER DOMAIN--BUT THAT MAKES NO SENSE. CLEA WAS BORN IN THE DARK DIMENSION RULED BY MY ENEMY, DORMAMMU, UNTIL SHE CAME TO EARTH, IT WAS THE ONLY HOME SHE KNEW.
BY THE VISHANTI! NOW I SENSE THE ANKH BURNING ON MY FOREHEAD! IT IS A MYSTIC SIGN THAT NEVER APPEARS UNLESS I AM IN MORTAL DANGER!
BUT WHY--? UNLESS...


... THE CLEA I'M FOLLOWING ISN'T CLEA AT ALL!
YOU!!
DEATH!!
DEAR STEPHEN --I WAS WONDERING WHEN YOU'D NOTICE.
AM I... DEAD?
NOT QUITE, BUT YOU'RE GETTING THERE.
I'LL GO NO FURTHER WITH YOU!
MUST WE PLAY THIS GAME AGAIN, MAGE? WHY DO YOU RESIST?
I AM PART OF THE ETERNAL BALANCE --THE YIN AND YANG OF EXISTENCE. SO LONG AS THERE IS LIFE, THERE MUST BE BE DEATH.
I UNDERSTAND THAT. I ACCEPT IT BUT I WILL NOT YIELD!
STUBBORN--AS EVER.
YES! BECAUSE I FIGHT--NOT FOR MY LIFE ALONE, BUT FOR THE LIVES OF ALL HUMANITY AND FOR THEIR IMMORTAL SOULS!
FOR THEIR SAKE, I MUST NOT, I WILL NOT, FAIL!
WIN A FEW, LOSE A FEW--BATTLES, AT ANY RATE. BUT THE WAR...?
ENJOY YOUR VICTORY, MY DARLING MAGE-- WHILE IT LASTS.
YOU'VE BEATEN ME, AND ONCE MORE WON YOUR LIFE. SO BE IT. BUT THERE WILL BE OTHER TIMES, OTHER BATTLES. I CAN LOSE A BILLION SUCH DUELS--YOU CAN LOSE ONLY ONE.
I CAN AFFORD TO BE PATIENT.


IT IS A LITTLE AFTER SUNSET, ON WHAT MAY WELL BE THE LAST NIGHT OF THE WORLD. THE PLACE IS THE OKEALACHOBEE RIVER, IN THE EVERGLADES, NEAR THE TOWN OF CITRUSVILLE, FLORIDA. THE SITUATION IS NOTHING TERRIBLY UNUSUAL FOR THESE ROUGH-AND-TUMBLE PARTS--A BODY LYING HALF-SUBMERGED IN THE SHALLOWS.
IT WAS LAIN HERE, UNMOVING, FOR MOST OF THE AFTERNOON. WITH THE NIGHT WILL COME THE SCAVENGERS OF THE SWAMP, TO CLAIM THE CORPSE FOR THEIR OWN. BY DAWN, IF THEY HAVE THEIR WAY, THERE WILL BE NOTHING LEFT BUT BONES.

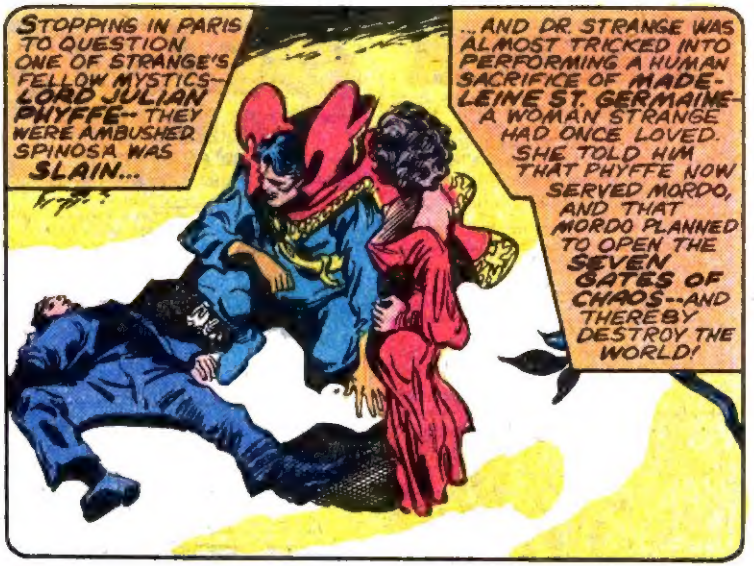
BUT...
BY THE VISHANTI--!
I... STILL... LIVE...!

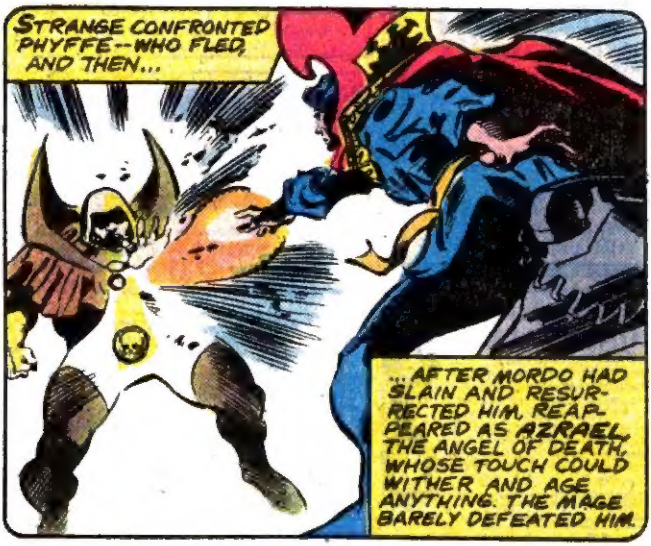

IF I'D LAIN IN THE WATER MUCH LONGER, I'D HAVE DROWNED.
SO WEAK... BUT I CANNOT REST NOW! THERE'S TOO MUCH AT STAKE! I MUST STAY ON MY FEET!

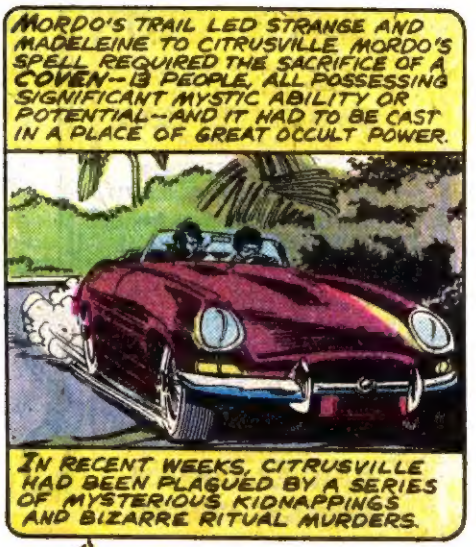

I MUST... I...
STRANGE COLLAPSES, HIS STRENGTH SPENT, AND HIS MIND DRIFTS BACK ACROSS THE HOURS AND DAYS AND MILES AS HE RECALLS THE EVENTS THAT BROUGHT HIM HERE.

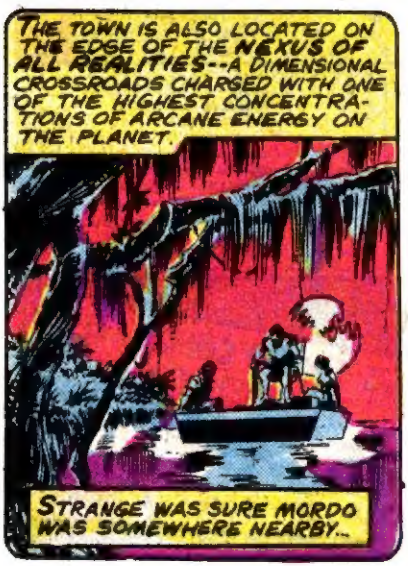
IT BEGAN WITH A REQUEST FOR AID FROM CARDINAL ALFEO SPINOSA--AN OLD FRIEND WHO WAS CURATE OF THE VATICAN'S SAN GABRIEL ARCHIVES, THE GREATEST STOREHOUSE OF OCCULT LITERATURE IN THE WORLD.
THE LIBRARY HAD BEEN ROBBED OF SOME OF ITS OLDEST AND RAREST TOMES...

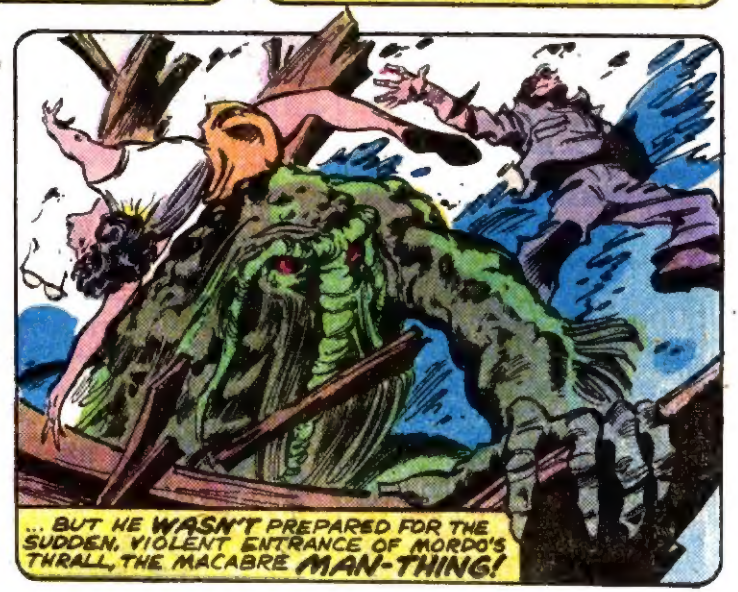
..BY BARON MORDO--STRANGE'S OLDEST, DEADLIEST, HUMAN FOE. STRANGE AND SPINOSA LEFT IMMEDIATELY TO HUNT HIM DOWN...


STOPPING IN PARIS TO QUESTION ONE OF STRANGE'S FELLOW MYSTICS--LORD JULIAN PHYFFE--THEY WERE AMBUSHED. SPINOSA WAS SLAIN...
...AND DR. STRANGE WAS ALMOST TRICKED INTO PERFORMING A HUMAN SACRIFICE OF MADELEINE ST. GERMAINE--A WOMAN STRANGE HAD ONCE LOVED. SHE TOLD HIM THAT PHYFFE NOW SERVED MORDO, AND THAT MORDO PLANNED TO OPEN THE SEVEN GATES OF CHAOS--AND THEREBY DESTROY THE WORLD!

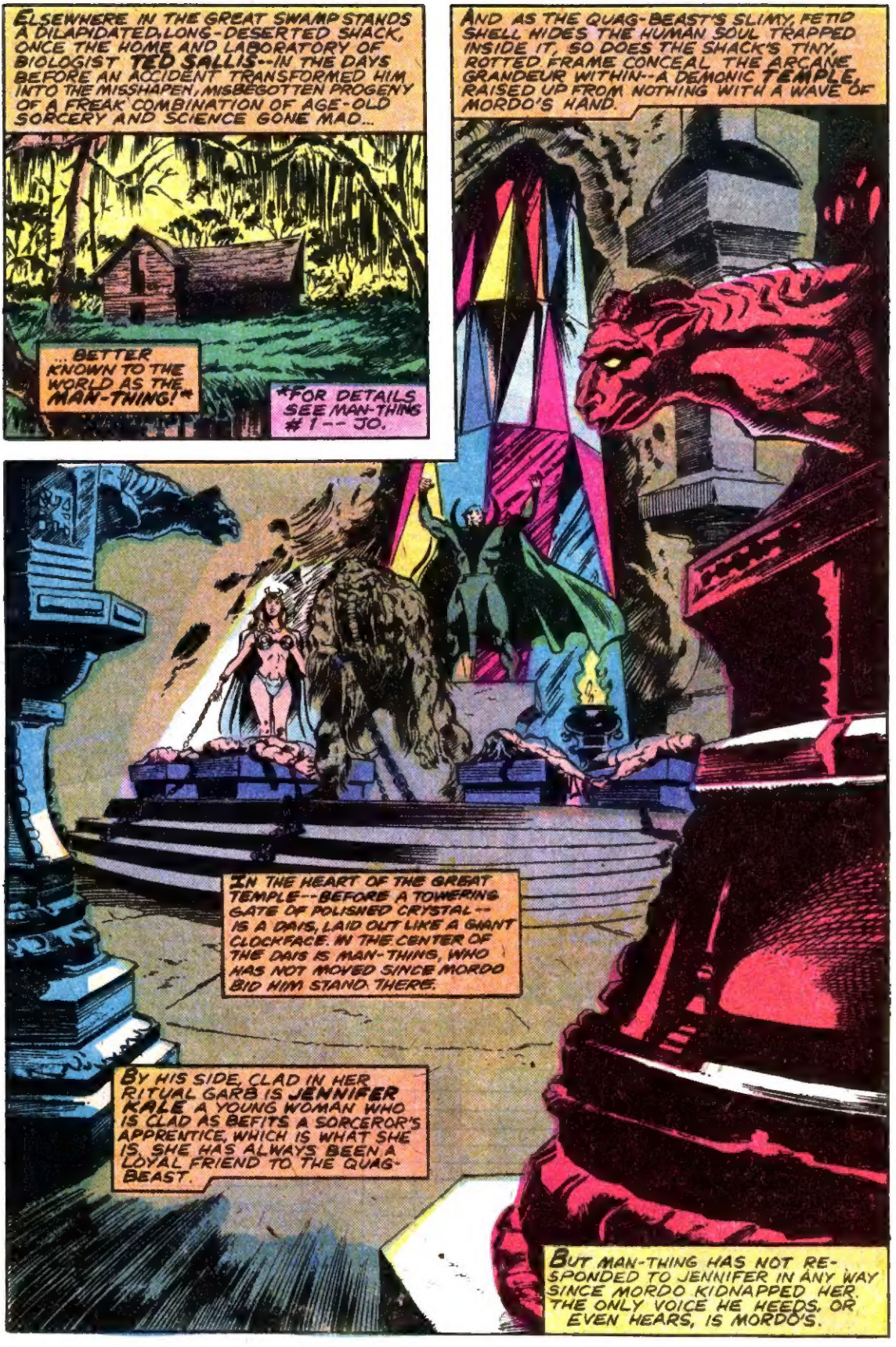

STRANGE CONFRONTED PHYFFE--WHO FLED, AND THEN...
...AFTER MORDO HAD SLAIN AND RESURRECTED HIM, REAPPEARED AS AZRAEL, THE ANGEL OF DEATH, WHOSE TOUCH COULD WITHER AND AGE ANYTHING. THE MAGE BARELY DEFEATED HIM.


MORDO'S TRAIL LED STRANGE AND MADELEINE TO CITRUSVILLE. MORDO'S SPELL REQUIRED THE SACRIFICE OF A COVEN--13 PEOPLE, ALL POSSESSING SIGNIFICANT MYSTIC ABILITY OR POTENTIAL--AND IT HAD TO BE CAST IN A PLACE OF GREAT OCCULT POWER.
IN RECENT WEEKS, CITRUSVILLE HAD BEEN PLAGUED BY A SERIES OF MYSTERIOUS KIDNAPPINGS AND BIZARRE RITUAL MURDERS.

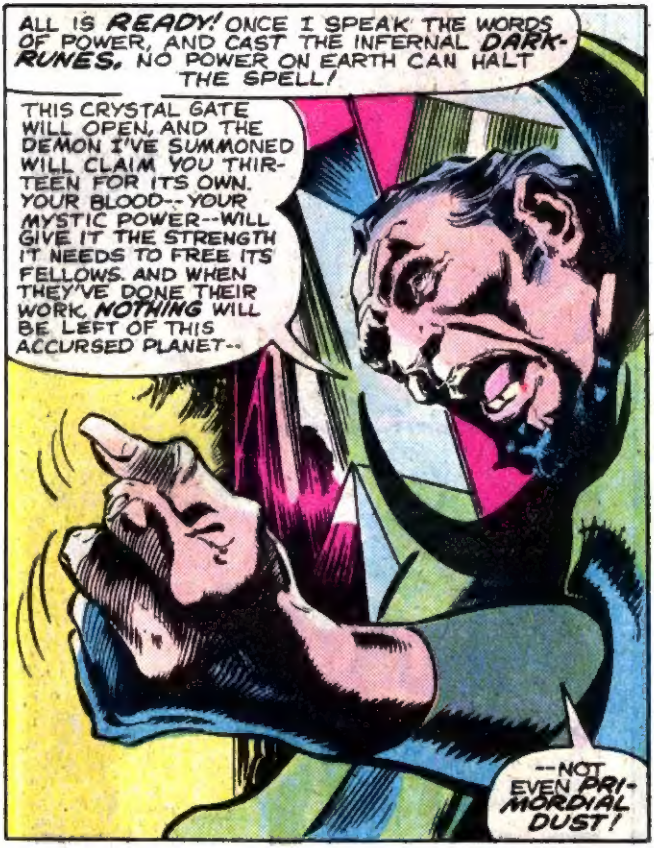

THE TOWN IS ALSO LOCATED ON THE EDGE OF THE NEXUS OF ALL REALITIES--A DIMENSIONAL CROSSROADS CHARGED WITH ONE OF THE HIGHEST CONCENTRATIONS OF ARCANE ENERGY ON THE PLANET.
STRANGE WAS SURE MORDO WAS SOMEWHERE NEARBY...


...BUT HE WASN'T PREPARED FOR THE SUDDEN, VIOLENT ENTRANCE OF MORDO'S THRALL, THE MACABRE MAN-THING!

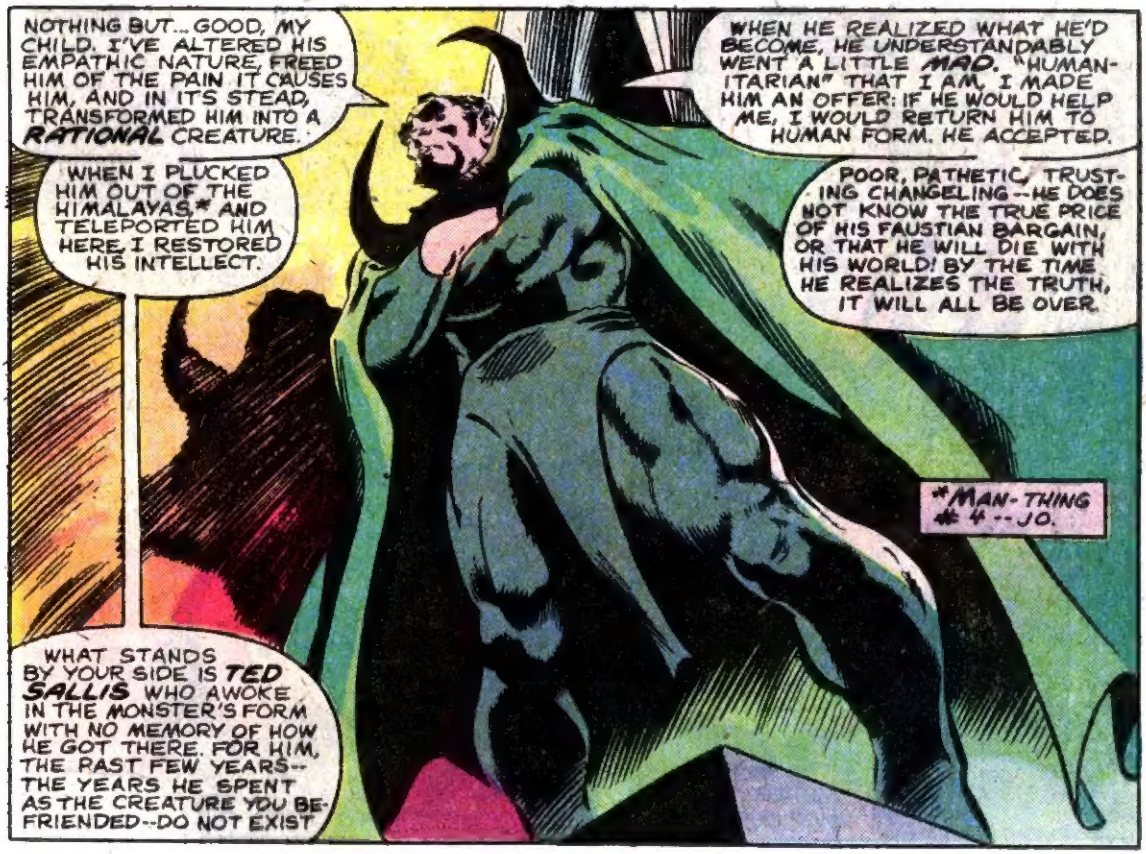
ONCE MORE, THE MAGE FOUGHT FOR HIS LIFE--BUT, AGAINST THE MUCK-MONSTER, EVEN HIS MIGHTIEST SPELLS PROVED STRANGELY INEFFECTUAL.
MAN-THING BATTLED WITH CUNNING AND INTELLIGENCE...
...DESPITE THE FACT THAT IT HAD ALWAYS BEEN AN EMPATHIC CREATURE, POSSESSING ALMOST NO MIND AND RESPONDING TO THE EMOTIONS OF THOSE AROUND HIM.
STRANGE DID HIS BEST, BUT MAN-THING PUSHED HIM UNDER WATER, AND HELD HIM THERE...
...UNTIL THE MAGE'S DESPERATE STRUGGLES CEASED.
BARON MORDO SALUTES YOU, SWAMP BEAST! FOR YOU HAVE TRIUMPHED WHERE SO MANY OTHERS HAVE FAILED.
YOU HAVE SLAIN DR. STRANGE!*
*THE PRECEDING RECAP COURTESY OF DR. STRANGE #'S 38-40, + MAN-THING #4 (=WHEW=!!)--JO.
MORDO WILL...NEVER KNOW HOW CLOSE... HE CAME TO SUCCEEDING.
WHEN I REALIZED MAN-THING MEANT TO KILL ME, INSTEAD OF CAPTURE ME, AS I'D MISTAKENLY ASSUMED, AND FOUND THAT I COULD NOT BREAK FREE OF HIS GRIP, I WITHDREW INTO A DEEP ZEN TRANCE.
I SLOWED MY LIFE PROCESSES DOWN TO ALMOST ZERO AND DECEIVED THE BEAST.
AND THAT ALL-OR-NOTHING STRATEGEM VERY NEARLY PROVED TO BE MY UNDOING.
I SANK TOO DEEPLY INTO THE TRANCE--MIMICKED DEATH SO PERFECTLY THAT THE ILLUSION ALMOST BECAME A REALITY.
THE ANKH--BLAZING BRIGHTER THAN EVER!
MORDO'S SPECIAL SACRIFICIAL COVEN MUST BE COMPLETE--HE'S PREPARING THE SPELLS WHICH WILL OPEN THE CHAOS GATES. I MUST STOP HIM!
IF I FAIL, THIS PLANET AND ALL ITS PEOPLE, ALL THAT EXISTS UPON IT, WILL PERISH.


ELSEWHERE IN THE GREAT SWAMP STANDS A DILAPIDATED, LONG-DESERTED SHACK, ONCE THE HOME AND LABORATORY OF BIOLOGIST TED SALLIS--IN THE DAYS BEFORE AN ACCIDENT TRANSFORMED HIM INTO THE MISSHAPEN, MISBEGOTTEN PROGENY OF A FREAK COMBINATION OF AGE-OLD SORCERY AND SCIENCE GONE MAD...
...BETTER KNOWN TO THE WORLD AS THE MAN-THING!*
*FOR DETAILS SEE MAN-THING #1 -- JO.
AND AS THE QUAG-BEAST'S SLIMY, FETID SHELL HIDES THE HUMAN SOUL TRAPPED INSIDE IT, SO DOES THE SHACK'S TINY, ROTTED FRAME CONCEAL THE ARCANE GRANDEUR WITHIN--A DEMONIC TEMPLE, RAISED UP FROM NOTHING WITH A WAVE OF MORDO'S HAND.
IN THE HEART OF THE GREAT TEMPLE--BEFORE A TOWERING GATE OF POLISHED CRYSTAL--IS A DAIS, LAID OUT LIKE A GIANT CLOCKFACE. IN THE CENTER OF THE DAIS IS MAN-THING, WHO HAS NOT MOVED SINCE MORDO BID HIM STAND THERE.
BY HIS SIDE, CLAD IN HER RITUAL GARB IS JENNIFER KALE A YOUNG WOMAN WHO IS CLAD AS BEFITS A SORCEROR'S APPRENTICE. WHICH IS WHAT SHE IS. SHE HAS ALWAYS BEEN A LOYAL FRIEND TO THE QUAG-BEAST.
BUT MAN-THING HAS NOT RESPONDED TO JENNIFER IN ANY WAY SINCE MORDO KIDNAPPED HER. THE ONLY VOICE HE HEEDS, OR EVEN HEARS, IS MORDO'S.

JEN AND MAN-THING ARE CHAINED IN THE CENTER OF A CIRCLE OF OBSIDIAN SLABS. ON EACH SLAB LIES A HUMAN SACRIFICE, ALTERNATING MALE AND FEMALE.
SOME OF THEM ARE STRANGERS, SOME ARE PEOPLE JEN HAS KNOWN ALL HER LIFE, AND SOME ARE FAMILY--HER GRANDFATHER, JOSHUA, AND BROTHER, ANDY.
JENNIFER HAS FACED DEATH BEFORE. BUT, SOMEHOW THIS TIME IS WORSE THAN THE OTHERS. WHEN MORDO CAME FOR HER, SHE RESISTED, BUT HE BEAT HER WITH CONTEMPTUOUS EASE, LAUGHING AS HE SMASHED HER INTO OBLIVION.
NOW HER MIND AND BODY SEEM FROZEN--LIKE A BIRD PARALYZED BY THE HYPNOTIC GAZE OF A COBRA. JEN KNOWS SHE IS COMPLETELY HELPLESS. SHE'S FRIGHTENED, AND SHE KNOWS THAT PLEASES MORDO.


ALL IS READY! ONCE I SPEAK THE WORDS OF POWER, AND CAST THE INFERNAL DARK-RUNES, NO POWER ON EARTH CAN HALT THE SPELL!
THIS CRYSTAL GATE WILL OPEN, AND THE DEMON I'VE SUMMONED WILL CLAIM YOU THIRTEEN FOR ITS OWN. YOUR BLOOD--YOUR MYSTIC POWER--WILL GIVE IT THE STRENGTH IT NEEDS TO FREE ITS FELLOWS. AND WHEN THEY'VE DONE THEIR WORK, NOTHING WILL BE LEFT OF THIS ACCURSED PLANET--
--NOT EVEN PRI-MORDIAL DUST!

THIS IS CRAZY! MORDO IS RADIATING PURE EVIL, AND I'M TERRIFIED. MAN-THING'S AN EMPATH--THESE VIOLENT EMOTIONS MUST BE AGONY FOR HIM. THEY SHOULD BE DRIVING HIM INTO A FRENZY...
...BUT HE'S STANDING STILL AS A STATUE.
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO HIM, MORDO?!


NOTHING BUT... GOOD, MY CHILD. I'VE ALTERED HIS EMPATHIC NATURE, FREED HIM OF THE PAIN IT CAUSES HIM, AND IN ITS STEAD, TRANSFORMED HIM INTO A RATIONAL CREATURE.
WHEN I PLUCKED HIM OUT OF THE HIMALAYAS,* AND TELEPORTED HIM HERE, I RESTORED HIS INTELLECT.
WHEN HE REALIZED WHAT HE'D BECOME, HE UNDERSTANDABLY WENT A LITTLE MAD. "HUMANITARIAN" THAT I AM, I MADE HIM AN OFFER: IF HE WOULD HELP ME, I WOULD RETURN HIM TO HUMAN FORM. HE ACCEPTED.
POOR, PATHETIC, TRUSTING CHANGELING--HE DOES NOT KNOW THE TRUE PRICE OF HIS FAUSTIAN BARGAIN, OR THAT HE WILL DIE WITH HIS WORLD! BY THE TIME HE REALIZES THE TRUTH, IT WILL ALL BE OVER.
*MAN-THING #4--JO.
WHAT STANDS BY YOUR SIDE IS TED SALLIS WHO AWOKE IN THE MONSTER'S FORM WITH NO MEMORY OF HOW HE GOT THERE. FOR HIM, THE PAST FEW YEARS--THE YEARS HE SPENT AS THE CREATURE YOU BEFRIENDED--DO NOT EXIST

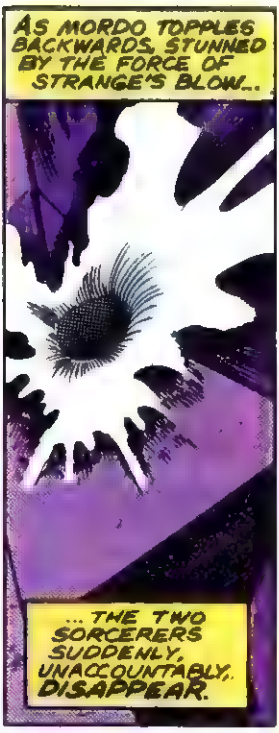
AND AFTER ALL THOSE WHO HAVE RIDICULED AND HUMILIATED ME HAVE PERISHED, I WILL SEEK OUT AN ALTERNATE EARTH--ONE WHERE THERE IS NO DR. STRANGE, NO ANCIENT ONE, NO DORMAMMU, NO SORCERERS OF ANY KIND. THAT WILL BE THE WORLD I WAS BORN TO RULE.
THE WORLD I SHALL RULE TILL THE END OF TIME!!
HEAR ME, THOU WHO RULE THE OUTER DARK, THOU DEMONS OF THE LOST, THOU DREAD LORDS OF THE MABDHARA!
HEAR ONE WHO CALLS THEE, BROTHER SUMMON THEE TO EARTH!
HEARKEN-- AND OBEY!!

NO!
BY ALL THAT'S HOLY, MORDO, YOUR SPELL WILL NOT BE COMPLETED! THE CHAOS GATES WILL NOT BE OPENED! THE EARTH WILL NOT DIE!
THIS DR. STRANGE SWEARS!

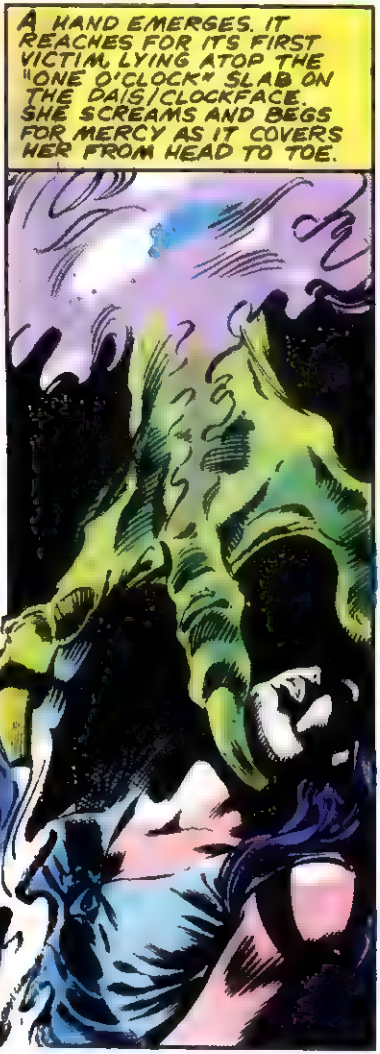
YOU'VE AS MANY INCARNATIONS AS DRACULA, OLD ENEMY. I SHOULD HAVE SNUFFED OUT YOUR LIFE THE MOMENT WE FIRST MET, IN THE HIMALAYAN SANCTUM SANCTORUM OF OUR MENTOR, THE ANCIENT ONE.
BUT, IN TRUTH, I WOULD NOT HAVE IT ANY OTHER WAY. THOUGH I HAVE TRIED TO SLAY YOU THROUGH SURROGATES, I HOPED IT WOULD END LIKE THIS
YOU AND I, BATTLING TOE-TO-TOE WITH ALL OUR SORCEROUS MIGHT--
--TO THE DEATH!!

MORDO.
EH--?!

STRANGE BEHIND ME! BUT HOW?!
ZUNNGNH!E
SOK!
A SIMPLE TRICK, MORDO. THE "DR. STRANGE" BEFORE YOU WAS AN ILLUSION.


AS MORDO TOPPLES BACKWARDS, STUNNED BY THE FORCE OF STRANGE'S BLOW...
... THE TWO SORCERERS SUDDENLY, UNACCOUNTABLY, DISAPPEAR.

FOR A TIME, ALL IS STILL AND SILENT IN MORDO'S TEMPLE. SOMEONE SOBS, OTHERS SEEK SOLACE IN PRAYER, WHILE STILL OTHERS PULL AT THEIR CHAINS, IN A LAST, DESPERATE BID FOR FREEDOM--
--AS THE GREAT CRYSTAL DOOR BEGINS TO OPEN


A HAND EMERGES. IT REACHES FOR ITS FIRST VICTIM, LYING ATOP THE "ONE O'CLOCK" SLAB ON THE DAIS/CLOCKFACE. SHE SCREAMS AND BEGS FOR MERCY AS IT COVERS HER FROM HEAD TO TOE.

BUT THE ONLY MERCY SHE RECEIVES IS THAT OF A QUICK DEATH.

LARGER NOW--NOURISHED BY THE LIFE ESSENCE AND MYSTIC POWER OF ITS FIRST VICTIM--THE HAND REACHES FOR ITS SECOND.
A DIMENSION AWAY FROM MORDO'S TEMPLE, DR. STRANGE HEARS THE MAN'S DEATH-SCREAM, AND IN HIS SOUL, HE SHIVERS.
MORDO HEARS THE SCREAM TOO--AND HE LAUGHS.
THAT WAS AN ADMIRABLE GAMBLE STRANGE--SNEAKING UP ON ME WHILE MY ATTENTION WAS DISTRACTED BY YOUR DOPPELGANGER!
UNFORTU-NATELY YOUR GAMBLE HAS FAILED!
HOW WERE YOU TO KNOW THAT, EVEN THEN, YOU WERE TOO LATE? THAT MY SPELL WAS COMPLETE, THE CHAOS DEMON SUMMONED?
NOW IT IS ALL BUT OVER!
LIKE A FOOL I'VE PLAYED RIGHT INTO HIS HANDS!
THE MINUTES PASS--AND ONE AFTER THE OTHER, THOSE ON THE SACRIFICIAL SLABS PERISH.
AND, WITH EACH DEATH, THE CHAOS GATES OPEN A FRACTION WIDER.
WHEN I HIT MORDO, HIS SPELL OF PROTECTION AUTOMATI-CALLY HURLED US INTO THE HEART OF THE NEXUS OF ALL REALITIES HE KNOWS HE DOESN'T HAVE TO DEFEAT ME--
--ONLY KEEP ME HERE, UNTIL THE DEMON'S WORK IS DONE. THEN THE OUTCOME OF THIS DUEL WON'T REALLY MATTER.

BECAUSE THE BIZARRE REALM IN WHICH STRANGE AND MORDO FIGHT TOUCHES ON ALL REALITIES, STRANGE IS ABLE TO SEE ALL THAT IS OCCURRING BACK IN MORDO'S TEMPLE, BUT HE IS UNABLE TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT.
WHAT CAN I DO?!
I'VE WRACKED MY BRAINS FOR AN ANSWER--ONLY TO FIND NONE! IF I TRY TO HELP THOSE PEOPLE, MORDO WILL SURELY SLAY ME. IF I STAY HERE, THEY WILL DIE. EITHER WAY, THE WORLD IS DOOMED.
YOU'RE RUNNING OUT OF TIME, STRANGE.
FROM THE BEGINNING, I'VE BEEN A STEP AHEAD OF YOU; ANTICIPATING YOUR EVERY MOVE--YOUR EVERY THOUGHT! I PLANNED WELL--LEFT NOTHING TO CHANCE!
FACE REALITY, "SORCERER SUPREME." THIS TIME YOU CANNOT, YOU WILL NOT WIN!
ON EARTH, THE BOY, JAXON, DIES, LEAVING A SINGLE PERSON ALIVE ON THE SLABS: MADELEINE ST. GERMAINE.
WITHOUT PAUSE, EAGER NOW TO BE FREE...
...THE DEMON REACHES FOR HER. HER LAST THOUGHTS ARE A CLUTTERED COLLAGE OF THOSE SHE LOVES: HER HUSBAND, HER CHILDREN--AND ONE OTHER.
WITH HER LAST BREATH, SHE CALLS HIS NAME.
STEPHEN!!

MADELEINE!
HE DID NOT KNOW HE COULD HURT SO MUCH.
WHEN AT LAST THE MAGE LIFTS HIS HEAD, THE LOOK IN HIS EYES WOULD SCARE DEATH ITSELF WITH A WORDLESS, PRIMAL CRY OF RAGE--AS TERRIBLE IN ITS WAY AS THE SACRIFICES' SCREAMS--HE LEAPS FOR MORDO.
SPELLS CRACKLE AND FLARE IN THE ETHER AS STRANGE CLOSES ON HIS FOE, DRIVEN BY A BERSERKER FURY THAT WILL NOT BE DENIED. HE TAKES PSYCHIC PUNISHMENT ENOUGH TO SLAY A SCORE OF HEROES...
...YET HE DOES NOT STOP, DOES NOT SLOW, UNTIL HIS HANDS CLOSE ON MORDO'S NECK.
STRANGE--HAVE MERCY! I YIELD!
I DO NOT HEAR YOU, BUTCHER OF WORLDS!
IT'S OUR TURN, MANNY. WHEN WE'RE ZAPPED, EARTH'S ZAPPED WITH US.
MORDO SAID YOU'VE GOT A BRAIN NOW--YOU'RE TED SALLIS. IF THAT'S TRUE, FOR PITY'S SAKE, LISTEN TO ME!
DON'T YOU SEE? MORDO LIED TO YOU! HE'S USING YOU! THIS SPELL WON'T MAKE YOU HUMAN AGAIN. IT'LL KILL YOU, JUST LIKE THE REST OF US--AND WITH YOU, THE WHOLE WORLD!
AND EVEN IF MORDO WASN'T LYING--IS THIS REALLY WHAT YOU WANTED?! WHAT KIND OF MAN ARE YOU TO BUY YOUR "HUMANITY" WITH THE LIVES OF INNOCENT PEOPLE?!? YOU'VE GOT TO HELP US--FIGHT FOR US!

DUMBLY, THE QUAG-BEAST STARES AT THE SKELETON IN HIS ARMS...

...AND AS TED SALLIS COMES TO HIS SENSES, SO ALSO DOES DR. STRANGE.
NO!
I WANT TO KILL YOU, MORDO, BUT I WILL NOT-
-FOR THAT WOULD MAKE ME NO BETTER THAN YOU.

THE CHAOS DEMON TRIES TO CRUSH HIM--TO ABSORB HIS LIFE AS IT DID THE OTHERS'--BUT, ALTHOUGH SALLIS FEELS PAIN, AND WEAKENS WITH EVERY STEP, HE DOES NOT DIE.

MAN-THING'S FREAKISH CONSTITUTION--NEITHER MAGIC NOR SCIENCE, BUT AN AMALGAM OF BOTH--PROTECTS SALLIS AS HE FORCES THE HAND BACK THROUGH THE ALMOST FULLY-OPENED GATE.

THEN, HIS GREAT, MOSSY ARMS STRETCH WIDE--AND HE SLAMS THE CRYSTAL DOORS SHUT.

NOW, IT IS THE DEMON'S TURN TO SCREAM, AS THE GATES SHATTER INTO A BILLION CRYSTAL SHARDS--THE DESTRUCTION OF THE BARRIER CREATES A TEAR BETWEEN DIMENSIONS...

...A WHIRLPOOL IN MID-AIR.

AT FIRST, SALLIS FIGHTS THE VORTEX'S PULL--BUT THEN, HE RELAXES A LITTLE AND LETS HIMSELF BE DRAWN TOWARDS OBLIVION.
AFTER ALL, HE REASONS, BETTER TO DIE THAN SPEND THE REST OF HIS LIFE AS A HIDEOUS MONSTER.
HOWEVER...
GOT YOU!
STRANGE ANCHORS SALLIS WITH ONE HAND...
...JUST LONG ENOUGH TO CAST A SPELL AND SEAL THE VORTEX WITH THE OTHER.
IT HAD BEEN A NEAR THING. STRANGE WAS RETURNING TO THE TEMPLE, TO A FINAL CONFRONTATION WITH THE CHAOS DEMON, WHEN MORDO STRUCK HIM DOWN FROM BEHIND. BUT AS MORDO PREPARED TO ADMINISTER THE COUP DE GRACE, A SHOCK WAVE OF UNBELIEVABLE PROPORTIONS EXPLODED THROUGH THE NEXUS -- THE RESULT OF SALLIS SLAMMING THE CHAOS GATES AND DISRUPTING MORDO'S SPELL. BOTH SORCERERS WERE SWEPT AWAY--SEPARATED--BY THE TERRIBLE SUPERNATURAL WINDS THAT FOLLOWED. STRANGE MANAGED TO FIND HIS WAY BACK TO EARTH. MORDO DID NOT. NOW, THE MASTER OF THE MYSTIC ARTS STANDS ON MORDO'S ALTAR--SALLIS BY HIS SIDE--SMILING AS HE BEHOLDS THE SCENE BEFORE HIS TIRED EYES.
TWELVE PEOPLE, WHO WERE DEAD AND DESTROYED HAVE BEEN RESTORED TO LIFE.
STEPHEN! OH--YOU ARE SO...BEAUTIFUL!
BY THE VISHANTI--A MIRACLE!
WHEN THE SPELL WAS BROKEN--UNCOMPLETED--THE CHAOS DEMON MUST HAVE SOMEHOW BEEN FORCED TO RETURN THE LIVES IT HAD STOLEN.
THERE IS STILL ONE TASK I MUST PERFORM! WE OWE THE MAN-THING EVERYTHING.
THE LEAST WE CAN DO IN REPAYMENT IS RETURN HIM TO HIS PROPER, HUMAN, FORM.

I...I DON'T UNDERSTAND! I CAST MY SPELL--BUT NOTHING HAPPENED! UNLESS--!
MAN-THING WAS CREATED BY A UNIQUE SYNTHESIS OF SORCERY AND SCIENCE.
"PERHAPS NEITHER DISCIPLINE ALONE CAN CURE HIM."
SALLIS HEARS, AND UNDERSTANDS.
AND IN HIS IMMEDIATE, SOUL-DEEP DESPAIR, HIS RESPONSE IS ALL TOO HUMAN.
HE LASHES OUT AT THOSE AROUND HIM.
HELP!
THE BEAST HAS GONE MAD! I CANNOT SAY I BLAME HIM, BUT I CANNOT LET HIM HARM THESE PEOPLE, EITHER.
HIS CURE MAY BE BEYOND MY POWERS--
--THOUGH I WILL SPEND THE REST OF MY DAYS TRYING TO FIND ONE! AT LEAST FOR NOW I CAN END HIS AGONY BY RETURNING TED SALLIS' INTELLECT TO THE MYSTIC LIMBO WHERE IT HAS RESIDED ALL THESE YEARS...
...LEAVING THE MAN-THING MIND-LESS ONCE MORE.
THE CREATURE PAUSES, LOOKS AROUND, SENSING THE MANY EMOTIONS SWIRLING AROUND HIM.
BUT NONE ARE VIOLENT--NONE THREATEN HIM OR CAUSE HIM EMPATHIC PAIN--AND SO, THE MAN-THING SHUFFLES BACK TOWARDS THE SWAMP THAT IS, FOR HIM, BOTH HOME AND PRISON.
I HAVE BEEN HUMBLED TODAY, MADELEINE. I AM MASTER OF MYSTIC ARTS--ACCLAIMED AS SORCERER SUPREME--YET FOR ALL THAT FABLED POWER...
...I COULD NOT HELP THE MAN WHO HELPED ME SAVE THE WORLD.
NEXT ISSUE: THE BLACK MIRROR!